



Name: Sister Martina Van Ryzin (Sister Mary St. Martin)

Date of Birth: June 10, 1923

Place of Birth: Appleton, Wisconsin

Parents: Clarence H. and Lucille (Schabo) Van Ryzin

Religious Profession: August 15, 1941

Date of Death: October 31, 2022

Age: 99

Years Professed: 81

#### Wake Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Madelene Louise Van Ryzin is the first child born to Clarence and Lucille (Schabo) Van Ryzin on June 10, 1923 in Appleton, Wisconsin. She was baptized at St. Mary's Church on June 15, 1923. In the following years Madelene was joined by five sisters and four brothers. One sister died as a baby.

Growing up in the Depression Era made the family life simple. Her father lost his job as a mechanic for the Wisconsin Michigan Power Company. He was able to get another job as a janitor with the Wisconsin Telephone Company. He became plant supervisor and held that position until he retired. His high school education and his love and skill in mathematics were assets for his job and for giving help to his children with homework assignments. Madelene was greatly influenced by his love for mathematics. Her mother had a sixth-grade education and was an excellent homemaker. All the children's clothes were sewn by her mother. Madelene's first bought dress was for her Confirmation.

Madelene and her brothers and sisters attended St. Therese Catholic School in Appleton. This is where she met the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. She attributes meeting the Sisters for the beginning of her vocation. She was especially fond of Sister Charlotte Scherrer and Sister Annellus Lotter, because of their kind, gentle ways and excellent teaching. Madelene wanted to join them and become a teaching Sister. Her Pastor, Father Matthias Hauch, was also a part of her call to Religious life. When he found out that a girl was leaning toward the Religious Life, he pursued her like the "Hound of Heaven," and Madelene described herself as the "Artful Dodger." He made every effort to foster her decision to answer God's call, even to the point of making a trip to visit Holy Family Convent to keep her focused.

In a letter dated June 6, 1937 Madelene wrote the following letter:

*Dear Mother Generose,*

*I am a girl, fourteen years old and am graduating from St. Therese School. I have always had a desire to become a Sister and would like to enter your Convent. Would you please write, letting me know, what is required as to fees, books and clothing? Please state also, the date when I may enter.*

*Sincerely yours,  
Madelene Van Ryzin*

Madelene received the information she requested and completed the application forms. With the full support of her parents, she was accepted to enter Holy Family Convent on August 20, 1937. Madelene completed her High School education in Holy Family Academy. At her reception into the Novitiate on June 14, 1939, she received the name, Sister Mary Saint Martin. At the time of Vatican Council II, when the Sisters were allowed to change back to their Baptismal name or shorten the Reception name, She chose to feminize Sister Mary Saint Martin and shorten it to Sister Martina. St. Martin of Tours, her feast day patron Saint, had become a model of charity for her. She especially liked the El Greco's painting of St. Martin giving half of his cloak to a beggar. This was a reminder for her to follow his example. On August 15, 1941, Sister Martina professed her Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience.

After High School, Sister Martina completed her undergraduate degree at Holy Family College with a Major in Mathematics and a Minor in French. She continued her studies at Marquette University earning a Master of Science degree in Mathematics. Sister Martina then pursued a doctorate at the University of Wisconsin in Madison in the History of Science and Mathematics. The title of her dissertation was *The Arabic-Latin Translation of Euclid's Elements in the Twelfth Century*.

Sister Martina began her teaching ministry at the middle and secondary level for ten years before joining the faculty of Holy Family College in 1960. In 1970 she was appointed Academic Dean. After her tenure as Dean, Sister Martina returned to the faculty and served another twenty-five years as Professor in the Mathematics and Computer Science Department. In 2007 she was named Professor Emeritus of the College. In 2010 Sister Martina marked her 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as a member of the Silver Lake College faculty. Love of learning and becoming a teacher were part of her life from childhood to adult. Sister Martina felt that this was part of God's call. Post-doctoral studies in higher education and computer science at a variety of universities completed her formal education. Sister Martina considered it to be a blessing to be a life-long learner. This knowledge was never for herself, but was shared in many ways with students and other organizations.

She was author of numerous articles and research projects including three biographies for the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* and she held membership in a number of professional organizations. Sister Martina was known locally as a Civil Defense expert and resource person. The Manitowoc County Civil Defense Department sponsored her education to become a Radiological Defense

Officer. She taught a radiological monitoring course at the College for twenty-five years. She was also an active member of the Manitowoc Historical Society.

Sister Martina's life was not all study and work with no play. She had opportunities to travel throughout the United States visiting many landmarks and cultural sites. She was able to travel to Canada, Mexico and several countries in Europe. One of her most rewarding experiences was to have had the opportunity to travel as a pilgrim to Assisi and Rome, walking in the footsteps of St. Francis and St. Clare.

Her leisure time was spent with her favorite hobbies: mystery book reading, watching sports, and crafting plastic canvas projects. The plastic canvas project included a display of over two hundred pieces to create various villages and scenes in the atmosphere of Christmas. The villages included a train with cars filled with toys and gifts and rows of decorated houses for the holiday. Across the way rabbits scamper across fields as farmers leave barns and animals. Throughout the wonderland there is a blanket of snow with Santa popping up with reindeer on rooftops and yards. The canvas project was often displayed in the College. At one point it was on display at St. Luke Convent in Two Rivers which had become the site of the Two Rivers Historical Society. Eventually all of the pieces were returned to our Community and are stored in our archives..

Sister Martina lived her life fully for 99 years. In her jubilee reflection she wrote, "I am humbled and grateful to God for having chosen me to follow Him by living a life of service to Him and His Church. Community Life afforded me many blessings and challenges. Opportunities for daily Mass, the Sacraments, common and personal prayer, friendships, the example of my Sisters, Community celebrations, recreations, and the concern and care for our personal needs, are a few of the blessings. In conclusion, I now pray with the psalmist, "What return shall I make to the Lord for all He has given to me?"

Thank you, Sister Martina, for all you have been for us in Community as a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. May you enjoy your eternal reward with all the Saints and Angels as they welcome you home.

May you rest in peace.